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ABSTRACT

This report provides an assessment of the progress of Sacramento START, an after-school learning program, for the period from September 1996 through May 1997. Evaluation instruments included standardized test scores for students in grades three through six and interviews with 18 principals from 20 START schools and teachers from 18 schools. Test scores are reported for the Sacramento (California) City Unified School District, the North Sacramento School District, and the Natomas School District. The program's goals are to provide a safe, positive afterschool environment for low-income children, to build the capacity of these children to succeed academically and socially, and to connect neighborhoods with schools by providing part-time employment to neighborhood residents, including the families of some START participants. The Sacramento START program operated in five school districts, and enrolled more than 2,000 students. It employed 134 staff members, 73% of whom were residents of the neighborhood of the participating school. An estimated $7.9 million in low-income family child care costs was saved, and over $500,000 was earned by neighborhood residents. The cost to the community was estimated at $3.50 per child per day. Minority children comprised 83% of participants. In the North Sacramento School District, the longer a child was enrolled, the greater the improvement in standardized test scores. In the Sacramento City District, 83% of enrolled students showed improvement in test scores, and the average improvement was an impressive 22 points for third and fourth graders. In the Natomas District, 56% of students improved their standardized test scores. Overall, 62% of teachers thought that START had helped their students academically, with improvements most noted for younger students. Principals indicated a strong level of support for the program. Recommendations from teachers and principals centered on strengthening the relationship between school and START staff members, increasing staff training, and focusing more on homework and literacy needs of students. An appendix contains nine tables of supplemental school information and a list of programs by site. (Contains 23 tables.) (SLD)

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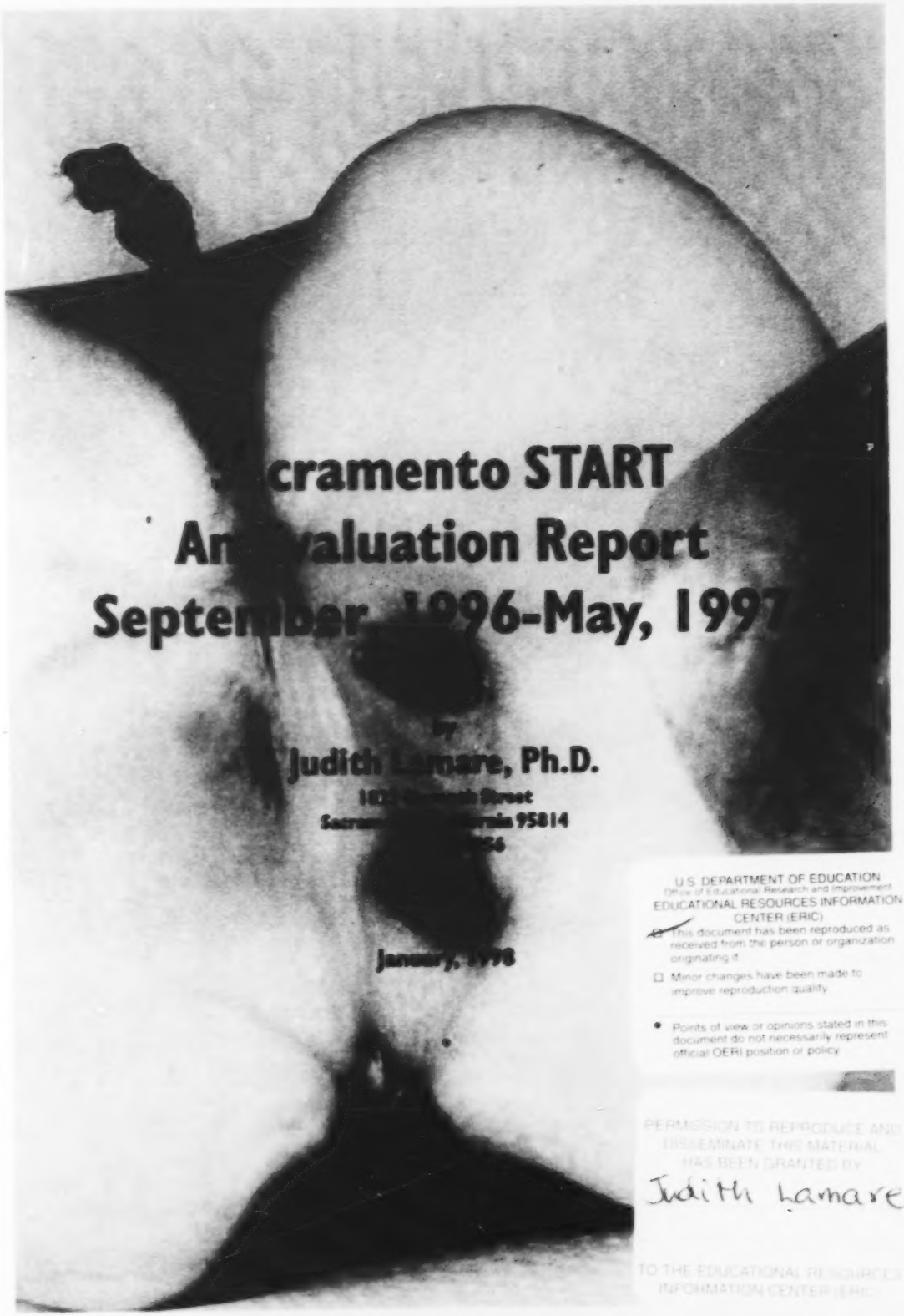

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An valuation Report
Septe ber 1996-May, 199

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January, 1998

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The Sacramento City Unified School District, the North Sacramento School District and the Natomas School District provided test score data to assist in the evaluation of the impact of the START program. A number of district personnel, including Michele Hobza, Nancy Law and Rebecca Haggarty, SCUSD, Debbie Morris, Anna Phelan and Judy Light, NSSD, and Carol Catenari of NSD, shared insights. Catherine Minnicucci, Minnicucci Associates, provided invaluable assistance in coordinating the analysis of the Title V program and the START program. Marianne Bird, START site director at American Lakes School, provided assistance and feedback in the preparation of this report. Dianna McDonell, ever patient and inventive, assisted with scheduling and with production of the report. Tom Whitney consulted on photographic reproduction.

Eighteen of the twenty START school principals responded to the request for an interview regarding the START program. Their experience and insights helped establish the context for evaluation. Thirty-three teachers from 19 schools took time from their busy schedules to share their thoughts about the START program. Their cooperation is very much appreciated.

Andria Fletcher (r), START's Program Director, confers with Nancy Law (l) and Rebecka Haggarty (c) of Sacramento City Unified School District's Accountability Office on test score comparisons for START students

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Sacramento START Evaluation Summary

This report is intended to provide an assessment of the progress of Sacramento START, an after-school learning program, between September 1996 and May 1997. It lays a foundation for long term evaluation of the program's impact in achieving its goals. Evaluation instruments used in this report included standardized test scores for students in third through sixth grades and interviews with principals and teachers. Test scores are reported for Sacramento City Unified School District, North Sacramento School District and Natomas School District only. The evaluation process was designed to provide valuable information that can be used to strengthen and improve the quality of the program, rather than to make a definitive judgement about the impact of the program. A minimum of three years of program operation is needed to form the basis for a judgement about the program's performance.

Program Description, September, 1996-May, 1997

The Sacramento START program reports the following goals: 1) to provide a safe, positive afterschool learning environment for low-income children; 2) to build the capacity of these children to succeed academically and socially; and 3) to connect neighborhoods with schools by providing part-time employment to neighborhood residents, including family members of participating START students.

The Sacramento START program reported the following data for the 1996/1997 academic year:

- Programs operated at twenty elementary schools in five school districts (Sacramento City Unified, North Sacramento, Natomas, Del Paso and Elk Grove);
- More than 2,000 students were enrolled two and a half hours a day, four days a week;
- Students received homework assistance, literacy training and enrichment activities;
- Programs were funded through a public/private partnership that included the City of Sacramento, five school districts and numerous corporations, foundations and individuals;
- The budget for the school year was $948,000;
- 134 site staff were employed, 73 percent of whom were residents of the neighborhood of the START school;
- Over $500,000 was earned by low-income neighborhood residents through part-time employment with Sacramento START;
- An estimated savings of $7.9 million dollars in school-age child care costs accrued to low-income families as a result of the enrollment of their children in START;
- All children attended free of charge, at a cost to the community of $3.50 per child per day;
- 83 percent of the students enrolled were either Asian-American, African-Ameri-

can, Hispanic or Latino-American, or Native-American;

- 58 percent of the START students lived in households in which English was not the primary language spoken;
- 87 percent of the START students qualified for the federally funded free and reduced lunch program;
- 74 percent began the program with reading test scores below the 50th percentile and 79 percent began with math scores below the 50th percentile.

START is a family activity for Jessica Jones, shown here with fellow third grade START students making maracas. Her parents are both program leaders and her older brother volunteers. Jessica made substantial gains in reading and math scores between 1996 and 1997.

Summary of Findings: START Students Test Scores Improved

Participating school districts use different testing systems. To adjust for these differences, District's provided scores converted to Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores. The NCE is an equal interval, normalized standard score based on national test results for the test administered. It is very similar to percentile, but NCE has equal intervals between scores while percentiles do not. Scores ranged from 1 to 99, have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21. A child that scored 54 NCE on a test last year and 54 NCE on a test this year has shown normal academic growth, and has maintained the same relative standing to others of his or her grade over both years. This is indicated by a zero (0) for NCE change. If the student shows greater than normal growth, this will be indicated by a positive number (+1, +2, etc.) for NCE change. If the student does not maintain normal growth, this will be indicated by a negative number (-1, -2, etc.) for NCE change. Testing was done for students in grades three through six.

Based on test scores adjusted to NCE, the following results were obtained for the 1996/1997 academic year:

- In the North Sacramento School District, the longer a student was enrolled in START, the greater the improvement; those who had been in START since January 1996 improved an average of 6 NCE points between Spring 1996 and Spring 1997.
- Compared with students participating in The Community That Cares programs in North Sacramento, START students showed greater improvement in their test scores (5.3 NCE compared with 3 NCE).

- In the Sacramento City Unified School District, among the lowest reading group (below the 26th percentile), 83 percent of the students enrolled in the START program improved dramatically; the average improvement was an impressive 22 points for third and fourth grade students and 15 points for fifth and sixth grade students.
- In the Sacramento City Unified School District, 67 percent of the START students improved their NCE scores, with average improvement being 5.4 NCE. When compared with their peers who did not have START, the improvement was greater for START students.
- In the North Sacramento School District, 55 percent of the START students improved their NCE scores, with the average improvement being 4.6 NCE. When compared with their peers who did not have START, the improvement was greater for START students.
- In the Natomas School District, 56 percent of the START students improved their NCE test scores, with the average improvement being 4 NCE.

START Impact as Reported by Classroom Teachers and Principals

Interviews with a random sample of classroom teachers at 18 schools provided insight into the teachers' assessment of START and START's impact on students. There is some inconsistency between teacher assessments and test score assessments, indicating that more thought needs to be given to these measures. Where teachers perceived improvement in students' academic or social skills, they were likely to attribute at least some of the improvement to START. Teachers of younger students and those lacking English skills were more likely to see a START impact on the students' skills.

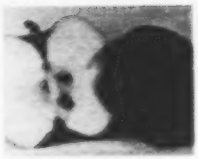
- Overall, 62 percent of the teachers thought that START had helped their students improve academically.
- Where teachers perceived improvements in homework completion and quality, self esteem, social skills and respect for learning, in most cases, the teachers believed that START had helped achieve the improvements.
- 83 percent of the kindergarten students, 75 percent of the first grade students and 60 percent of the students learning English were judged by their teachers as being helped by START to improve academically.

Interviews with principals indicated a strong level of support for the START program, and a desire to work with the program to improve its impact on students.

Recommendations by teachers and principals emphasized strengthening the relationship between the school staff and the START staff, increasing training for START personnel on classroom management and discipline, and focusing more the literacy and homework needs of the children enrolled in the program.

Recommendations

- Drop-outs do not receive the benefit of the program. While mobility is a demographic characteristic in low income areas, significant numbers of START drop-outs remained in residence at the school. Further investigation of the drop-out issue may help the program improve performance.



Introduction

In 1995, concern about public education in the City of Sacramento launched the City into a new direction. Student performance on achievement tests documented that most students were performing below the national average. The START program was designed by the City to infuse new support into the school environment. Funds were allocated and partnership agreements were forged between the City and five school districts, Sacramento City Unified School District, North Sacramento School District, Del Paso School District, Natomas School District and Elk Grove School District. Private sector and community support expanded the START partnership.

During the period under study, the START goal was to build the capacity of children to succeed academically and socially by providing after-school learning experiences for nine hours a week to one hundred or more students at each site. In September, 1996, a pilot evaluation of the first five months of START was completed. Based on what was learned during the pilot phase, the evaluation design for this study was prepared. This second evaluation study focuses on the first full academic year of operation (September, 1996-May, 1997).

The priority in preparing this report was to focus on test score results. The difficulties of working with each district to assess test score results and make comparisons absorbed the bulk of the energy devoted to this project. The test score data are limited and also cannot measure many of the changes START is seeking.

Developing the START program to respond to the specific strengths and problems of each site is a challenge. Site level personnel need feedback that will help them fine-tune their work. It would be helpful to identify site specific activities that are exemplary in achieving results. The evaluation process could provide the background information that would assist in that process. However, this report does not provide site level information. In part this is due to the fact that at the site level test score data is available only for a few students at each level. The numbers often do not permit generalizations to be drawn.

This study also did not gather data about the perceptions of parents, students or START staff, all of whom have an important role and stake in the program. Ideally, an evaluation process would engage all the participants in the evaluation process.

This study did provide continuous feedback to the START Director as results became available. She was able tomake program adjustments and to design the 1997-1998 program to respond to the evaluation findings.

This report records the findings of evaluation, and demonstrates that the START program had a measurable impact on student performance duirng the 1996-1997 academic year, and is fulfilling a much needed role in the educational community.

issue may help the program improve performance.

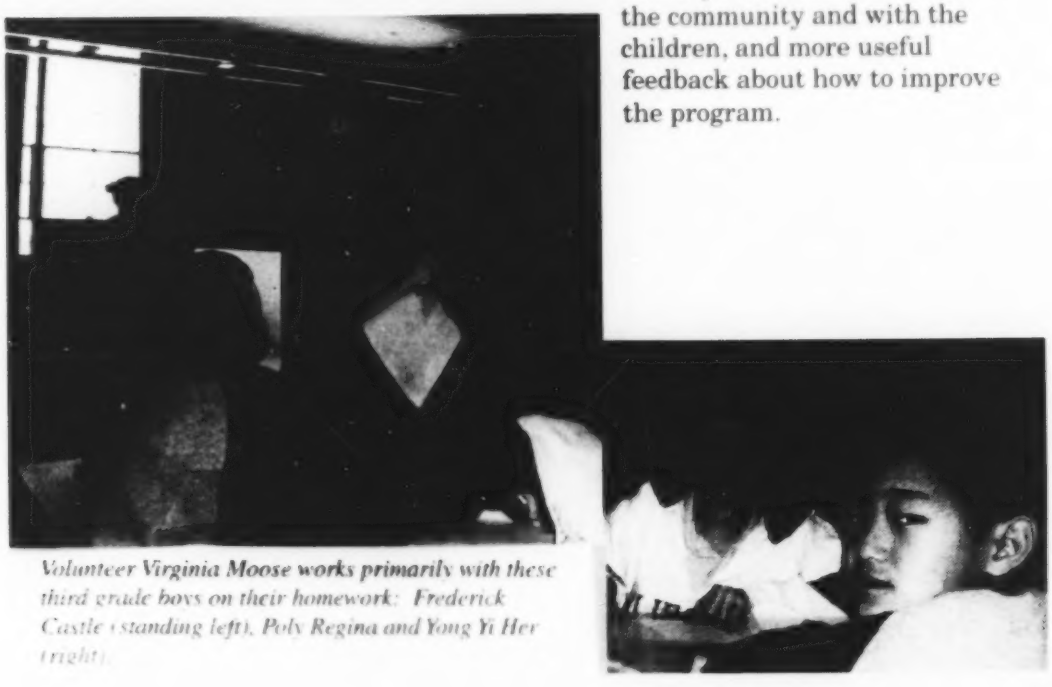
• Competent and dependable volunteers can have a significant impact on program performance. The program infrastructure has been provided through public-private funding and partnership, but improving the success of the program depends upon getting more adults spending more time with more children on a sustained basis. In small groups and through one-on-one attention many of the children in the program can accelerate their academic growth.

START should establish volunteer participation goals and monitor progress, with a regular report to the community leadership. More media attention to those volunteers who exemplify the best qualifications could help. To the maximum extent possible, START families must be involved as volunteers. A task force of specially qualified community leaders and exemplary START parents specifically focused on the goal of reaching volunteer participation goals may be the next step.

• Collaboration between the START program and the schools is a key element that requires on-going and two-way communication.

• Personnel issues are always very central to the labor-intensive work of teaching. START recruits, trains, manages, supervises and evaluates over 100 employees who work directly with children. Working with the schools and other partners to continuously improve staff skills and effectiveness will obviously be a big part of START's ongoing challenge.

• Evaluation focusing solely on test score achievements fails to measure important elements of the program's achievement. Expanding evaluation tools could provide a better picture of START's role in the community and with the children, and more useful feedback about how to improve the program.



Volunteer Virginia Moose works primarily with these third grade boys on their homework: Frederick Castle (standing left), Poly Regina and Yong Yi Her (right).

The START Challenge

The START program seeks to improve academic performance and other student skills through after school learning experiences. START is directed at those schools with the greatest need. In general, START schools are drawn from the bottom half of each District's schools in terms of academic test performance. Table 1 describes the schools with START programs in terms of their reading and math test score performances in 1995/96; the percentage of students whose home language is not English; the percentage of students who are from Aid to Dependent Children families; and in terms of the ethnic mix in the school. The schools do vary somewhat, but most are high in poor reading and math scores and most exceed the district average for AFDC families. These schools also tend to have more families where English is not the language spoken at home. In general, the schools have a mix of different ethnic groups, and only in three schools is there a predominant ethnic group.

Table 1:
START Schools, Demographic Characteristics

	Reading	Math	Home		Ethnicity				
Site	Below	Below	Language						Native
#	25th%	25th%	Not English	AFDC	Asian	Afr-Amer	Hispanic	White	American
2	17%	22%	15%	42%	16%	36%	20%	27%	1%
4	34%	23%	66%	81%	63%	15%	14%	7%	1%
6	39%	46%	28%	67%	17%	47%	21%	13%	1%
7	34%	36%	25%	52%	7%	15%	39%	37%	2%
9	42%	47%	25%	77%	27%	21%	22%	29%	2%
10	41%	43%	66%	94%	67%	14%	14%	5%	1%
11	25%	33%	23%	70%	16%	27%	29%	27%	1%
12	31%	29%	50%	58%	2%	17%	63%	14%	4%
13	31%	29%	45%	55%	39%	16%	28%	16%	2%
14	41%	51%	54%	72%	36%	19%	34%	11%	0%
16	>50%	>50%							
17	>50%	>50%							
18	>50%	>50%							
20	--	--	6%	21%	10%	30%	25%	34%	1%
21	42%	47%	49%	79%	23%	25%	39%	12%	1%
22	23%	27%	48%	90%	45%	29%	18%	7%	1%
23	42%	38%	53%	69%	40%	16%	32%	10%	3%
24	52%	43%	56%	77%	50%	28%	15%	6%	1%

Data on schools obtained from school districts. For SCUSD, consult website at www.scusd.edu/schools.

Some START schools have high turnover rates, while others are more stable. High transiency contributes to high turnover in the START program itself. Table 2 describes the START program in terms of enrollments, drop-outs, and completions during the period January 1, 1996 to December 31, 1996. (Additional drop-outs were recorded between January and May 1997; these are treated as participants in the report.) Consult the appendix for a school by school breakdown.

Table 2a:
Length of Participation in START

Category	% of START Students	Average # Per Site
Enrolled Jan-Dec.,1996	14%	28
Enrolled Jan-May, 1996	26%	52
Enrolled Sept.-Dec., 1996	29%	53
Dropped during Fall	11%	26
Dropped during Spring	13%	27
Entered late Fall	7%	14
Total	100%	200

Table 2b:
Reasons for Drops

Category	% of Dropped Students	# of Dropped Students
Attendance	60%	330
Moved	14%	78
Parent Withdrew Child	8%	43
Transportation	4%	22
Student Withdrew	4%	23
Student Withdrew for Other Program	4%	22
Behavior	2%	13
None	3%	16
Total	99%	550

On average 68 percent of the students enrolled in the START program completed one or more semesters by December, 1996. On average, 14 percent completed the entire year of the program. Sites varied with one site having less than 50 percent of their START students completing one or more semesters. In contrast, three sites had more than 80 percent of their START students complete at least one semester.

The reason given by START site coordinators for most drop-outs was lack of attendance. Only 2 percent were expelled for behavior reasons.

START's Impact on Academic Performance

The most objective way to answer whether students are learning more is to compare test scores. Test and re-test scores are available for *some* of the students in the START program. There are a number of constraints: 1) students move in and out of school; 2) students drop START for other reasons; 3) students graduate, 4) in some districts, students are not given standardized tests until they reach third grade; 5) students may not be given standardized tests if they are not proficient in English and 6) students may miss school the day of the test.

As an example of the ability to measure program impact, consider School A. In 1996, 182 students were enrolled in the START program at one time or another, and 111 completed at least three months of the START program.

- 24 students (13%) completed 8 months of the program
- 39 students (21%) completed the first five months of the program only
- 58 students (32%) completed the three months in the fall of 1996 only

For 111 students, there are 30 students, or less than one-third, for whom there are two test scores to compare.

A child who scores 54 NCE on a test last year and an NCE score of 54 again this year has shown expected normal academic growth, and has maintained the same relative standing to others of his grade over both years.

Although the three districts use different tests, the comparison for all students is the Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) change. The Normal Curve Equivalent is an equal interval, normalized standard score and is based on national tests results for the test administered. It is very similar to percentile, but NCE has equal intervals between scores while percentiles do not.

Valerie Knight is a sixth grader at American Lakes, shown here sharing a story with first grade student Cornelius. Valerie made substantial gains in both reading and math scores between 1996 and 1997 tests. Cornelius' gains were not measured by the standardized testing process.

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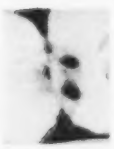
Scores range from 1 to 99, have a mean of 50, and a standard deviation of 21. A child who scores 54 NCE on a test last year and an NCE score of 54 again this year has shown normal academic growth, and has maintained the same relative standing to others of his grade over both years. If the student does not maintain normal growth, the NCE score will fall, and if the student shows greater than normal growth, his NCE score will be greater than last year's NCE score. A growth of one standard deviation or more (21 plus NCE) is a very substantial growth.

Fifty-six percent of the students achieved greater than expected growth. On average, START students improved 3 Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE) in reading and 5 NCE in math.



Natomas School District

Natomas School District uses the CTBS4 testing system, Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, 4th Edition, and tests are given to first through sixth graders. To compare student performance improvements from Spring, 1996 to Spring, 1997, scores in reading comprehension and math concepts and applications were compared. Students who were in kindergarten or sixth grade in 1996 could not be included in the matched scores analysis. Forty-six START students had two tests scores in reading and math. Fifty-six percent of the students improved their NCE score between 1996 and 1997, achieving greater than expected growth. On average, START students improved 3 Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE) in reading and 5 NCE in math.

Improvement was greatest for 1997-third graders and for 1997-fifth graders. On average second and fourth graders improved little or not at all. Table 3 provides the average test score improvements by grade.

Table 3:
Natomas School District START Students Changes in Test Scores, 1996 to 1997 (Normal Curve Equivalents)

Grade	Reading	n	Math	n
2nd	1	11	0	11
3rd	12	15	12	15
4th	-6	13	-1	13
5th	9	7	11	7
Average	3		5	

Limited numbers preclude more detailed quantitative analysis. The site coordinator for this START program reviewed these data and commented that there were some program characteristics that may have affected the positive results for the third graders. First, the third grade students who did improve markedly included students with serious academic problems, so the improvements are not because the students in this group were exceptionally good. Secondly, she noted that the relationship between the START program and the third grade teachers was closer than that

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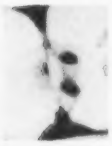
relationship with other grade teachers. For one thing, the third grade classrooms were used by the START program all year for homework time. During that time, teachers were also usually present in the classrooms. Therefore the third grade students may have been reinforced by their teachers in their START work. Also the teachers were able to maintain better than average communication with the START project leaders. The site coordinator also commented that the fifth graders had a consistent project leader during the homework time, while the second grade students experienced a lot of turnover with their project leaders. Also neither the site coordinator nor the project leaders had contact with the second grade teachers.



North Sacramento School District

North Sacramento School District uses the CAT5 test system, the California Achievement Test. The District compiles a "matched scores report" to compare students with test scores from two points in time on reading comprehension and math concepts and applications. The score used is the normal curve equivalent (NCE) for 1996 and 1997.

The findings cover 105 third through sixth grade students in the district who had exposure to the START program, either in the pilot phase (January - May, 1996), or the Fall, 1996 phase, or in both. Only students with test scores in both 1996 and 1997 are included.

Among the START students in North Sacramento School District for whom we have matched test scores, 55 percent improved in their reading test scores (NCEs) and 53 percent improved in math. The average reading improvement was 4.6 NCE and the average math improvement was 4.4 NCE.

Fifty-five percent improved in their reading test scores (NCEs) and 53 percent improved in math. The average reading improvement was 4.6 NCE and the average math improvement was 4.4 NCE.

The START student improvement can be compared with the district-wide Title V sample student improvement of 3 NCE in reading. (See Minicucci Associates, The Community that Cares: Second Year Evaluation Report, August, 1997.)

Importantly, **the longer the student had been in START, the greater the average test score improvement.** Those who had been in since January, 1996 improved an **average of 6 points** each on reading and math; those who had completed the START pilot, but not re-enrolled improved an **average of 4 points** and those who had enrolled in fall, 1996 and remained at least until 12/20/96, improved an average of **3 points in reading** and 2 points in math.

The District requested that T-Tests be performed on the matched scores. The differences in scores for all START students were statistically significant at .01 for reading scores and .03 for math scores. The differences for students who were enrolled for the full year were also statistically significant (at .03 and .05). For the students not enrolled for the whole year, the scores differences would not be considered statistically significant.

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Table 4:
North Sacramento Average Test Score Improvements (NCE) by Exposure to START Program, Statistical Significance Tests

Enrollment	Reading Change	Reading Significance	n	Math Change	Math Significance	n
All START	5	0.01	104	4	0.03	98
Full program	6	0.03	43	6	0.05	38
Fall only	3	0.21	31	2	0.36	29
Pilot only	4	0.11	29	4	0.14	31

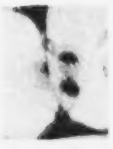
There were differences in performance by grade, with sixth graders showing the largest gains.

Table 5:
North Sacramento Test Score Improvements for START Students by Grade

Grade	Reading	n	Math	n
3rd	2	23	5	20
4th	0	30	4	31
5th	4	25	0	24
6th	12	27	9	25
Average	5		4	

Comparing START NSSD Student Score Improvement with Non-START Students by Grade

START students were compared with non-START students at the same schools by grade to estimate whether START students had an additional increment of improvement which could be attributed to the START program. Overall, START improved .75 NCE more than non-START students. START students with a full year of the START program improved 1 NCE more than the non-START students. **START sixth graders (n=27) did remarkably better than their peers who did not have START.**



Sacramento City Unified School District

Sacramento City School Unified District (SCUSD) uses the SALT (Sacramento Achievement Levels Test) system, and tested students in reading and math in the Fall of 1996 and in the Spring of 1997. The District made available data to compare students with test scores from two points in time on reading comprehension and math concepts and applications. These data were then translated into NCE scores.

The findings cover 653 third through sixth grade students in the district who had exposure to the START program, either in the pilot phase (January - May, 1996), or

the Fall, 1996 phase, or in both. Only students with test scores in both Fall of 1996 and Spring of 1997 are included. In addition, scores were compared for students who dropped out of the START program, but who remained in the District and recorded scores on both tests. Also, comparisons were computed separately for only those students who had been enrolled in the START program both in the fall and in May, 1997. Finally, comparisons were computed for students on Spring 1996 to Spring 1997 tests for those students who had been enrolled in START in the Spring of 1996. The comparisons from these latter two analysis are not reported because they were very similar and support the same conclusions. Math score analysis is not reported here because of the extensive analysis required of reading scores.

Throughout all of the testing, the most significant correlation found was that the lower the student's reading level in the initial test, the higher the growth. . . .

Throughout all of the testing, the most significant correlation found was that the lower the student's reading level in the initial test, the higher the growth was likely to be between that test and the second test. Students were grouped into three categories: 1) those at or below the 25th percentile in reading in the Fall, 1996 SALT test; 2) those between 25th and 50th percentiles; and 3) those over the 50th percentile. There were significant differences in growth between these three groups, and these differences were found in START students and in non-START students. What this means is that analysis of test score differences between groups is meaningful only when the groups are broken down by reading level and then comparisons are made between students at roughly the same level.

Among all the START students in SCUSD for whom we have matched test scores, 67 percent improved in their reading test scores (NCEs). The average reading improvement was 5.4 NCE. **Among the lowest reading group, those who had scored less than the 26th percentile in the Fall of 1996, 83 percent improved their reading scores. The average NCE change for those improving in that group was an impressive 22 points for students in third and fourth grades and 15 points of students in fifth and sixth grades.** Averaged over all the START students in this lowest reading group, the NCE improvement was 16 points. Students in higher levels of reading did not on average improve their NCE scores between September and May. It is the large gains by the lowest group that makes the average START student show an increased NCE score. [Additional analysis on the North Sacramento District data demonstrated a similar though less marked pattern.]

START students in the garden club study lavender with Program Leader Lorena Dunham, applying reading and math skills in practical ways.

Table 6:
Increases in Reading NCE for START Students at SCUSD

Reading	All Start	Lowest Fall Reading Group Those who improved 96-97
3rd	7 NCE	22 NCE
4th	10 NCE	22 NCE
5th	3 NCE	15 NCE
6th	1 NCE	15 NCE
Average	5 NCE	

Comparing START SCUSD Student Score Improvement with Non-START Students by Grade

Efforts to compare START score improvements with a control group are fraught with difficulties. START is not an experiment where students otherwise equivalent in all ways are randomly assigned to be in START or not. This section compares the START and non-START students, as if they were in all other ways equal, but with caution advised. Some of the difficulties identified by the Sacramento City Unified School District Accountability Office in making such comparisons are the following:

1. There is no appropriate control group to compare with; comparison with other students at the same grade level, even students at the same reading level and grade level, is a crude comparison that can yield inaccurate conclusions.

2. There are too many variables that affect test performance to be able to isolate and precisely measure the impact of START on test performance. Parent support, for example, may be a critical intervening variable.

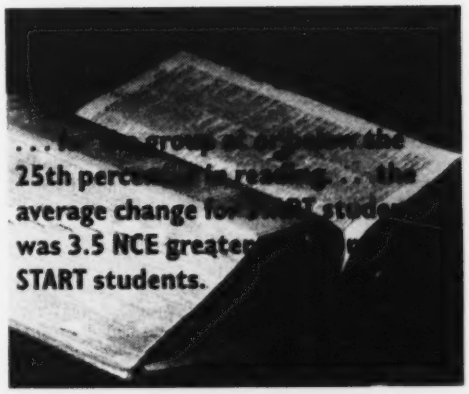
3. The assignment of students to START and non-START groups is not random, nor is it possible within the financial constraints of the program to set up a matched pairs comparison that isolates the START impact.

4. A program should be fully implemented before it is evaluated; it needs two to three years to operationalize the concept. It is premature to use the test score analysis comparisons for the START program as a way to judge its effectiveness.

There are other, corollary reasons for not relying upon test score analysis to evaluate the START program. First, test score data exist for only a portion of the students, as pointed out earlier. Second, the students' choices about how long to stay in the START program further reduce the available pool of students to compare, or, alternatively, add the complication of classifying students with very different exposures to START in the experimental group.

Given these concerns, comparison of test score changes in NCE units between students at START schools who were involved in the START program for at least one semester with those who had no involvement or were early drop-outs, yielded interesting results, however. First, the pattern of change in both groups is that

positive changes are larger for the group at or below the 25th percentile in reading in the Fall of 1996. In this group, the average change for START students was 3.5 NCE greater than for non-START students. The difference was most pronounced for fifth grade, not present for fourth grade, and was 2 NCE for 3rd and 6th grade.



Students between the 26th and 50th percentiles in reading in the Fall of 1996 showed little difference in average change in NCE (1 NCE), with START students not doing as well as non-START students. There were no differences in achievement in the highest reading group between START and non-START students.

Overall, averaging all the grades and levels of reading, **START students gained 5.4 NCE and non-START students gained 3.9 NCE.** This indicates that on average, students were improving more than normal growth, remembering that those with the fewest skills were making the progress, while those in the middle and upper ends of the spectrum were not making progress beyond normal growth.

This should not be considered a hard and fast finding, but rather a working finding, indicating that there may be reason to believe that the START program is helping students at the lowest level to bring themselves further along, when the schools and school programs are also moving them in the same direction. In this case, the fifth graders reading below the 25th percentile seemed to show the most movement beyond that which would have occurred without START.

Chloe Martinez, sixth grade, American Lakes School, handing out the ***Sacramento Bee*** *to fellow START journalism club members, and Eian Connor, fourth grade, Bannon Creek School [right] made substantial gains in reading and math between tests in 1996 and 1997. The club activities provide practical ways to practice and enhance literacy skills.*

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Teachers Evaluate the START Program

The teachers' evaluation is based on interviews with 33 teachers and their comments on 150 students in the START program. Teachers were randomly selected from all teachers with at least three START students. Three teachers were sampled from each school, and repeated attempts were made to interview any two of these three teachers. In a few cases substitutions were made because teachers were on-leave or off-track. Two teachers were interviewed at fifteen of the 20 START schools, one teacher gave an interview at three schools, and for two schools, no interviews were achieved. The teachers interviewed included all grades, K through 6. Interviews were conducted primarily in April, 1997, and ranged from 15 minutes to 90 minutes in length. Teachers were asked general questions about START and they were also asked specific questions about their students in START and the program's impact on the students.

The attempt to incorporate teacher evaluation into the START program through person to person interviews, using open ended questions, revealed a broad range of responses from the elementary teaching community. Some common themes were identified that have been helpful to the START program. But these are interpreted against a background of wide variety, and the focus should be on involving teachers at the site in on-going collaboration, rather than generalizing from this small sample. For this reason, detailed tables are reported in the Appendix.

Not all teachers are equally available or interested. There was a large contrast in teacher response to the request for interview. Some teachers came forward quickly, and scheduled time easily and in a place and time where confidential discussion was possible. They gave abundantly of their time and shared their views frankly. Their good will was remarkably apparent. At the other extreme were teachers who ignored many attempts to contact them, some who refused interviews, and others who gave very little input when interviewed. In a few cases, teachers scheduled interviews at times and places where there was little privacy or opportunity to focus.

To fully meet its objectives, START should identify teachers in terms of their support for the START program, and provide information to them in proportion to their interest. START should identify those teachers who are a resource for the program and work closely with them while keeping all teachers informed at a basic level about the program. A teacher support group could be a very valuable ally in the development of the START program, and at least some teachers appear to be very willing to provide more support to START if solicited. At the same time, there are teachers who will not support the program. Specifically inviting teachers to volunteer time to the program could help identify the most supportive teachers who could also be delegates for the program in the teacher community at their school.

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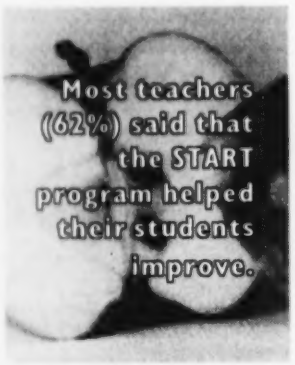
START can gain the confidence of the teaching community by addressing disicpline issues, providing sustained and meaningful two-way communication with teachers about the program and about their specific students, and by improving focus in START on the specific literacy and homework needs of the students.

Teachers' Evaluations of START Program



Most teachers (62%) said that the START program helped their students improve academic performance, but 22 percent could not say whether START had a positive impact on academic performance. Only 13 percent said that the program did not help their students. One of the constraints that teachers faced in assessing the program was their lack of involvement and knowledge about what START was actually doing with their students.

Teacher involvement and knowledge about the program was fairly low. Just sixteen percent of the randomly selected sample of teachers were directly involved in START program. Most teachers had some idea of what the START program was about, with 59 percent describing START accurately. Nevertheless, more than a third, 38 percent, said they did not know what START does, and 3 percent didn't answer the question (indicating a lack of knowledge).

Teachers mentioned that they learned from their students about the START program, and that they noticed the program when it used their classroom or a nearby classroom. A few mentioned that they had gone to observe the START program, and others expressed regret that they had not taken the trouble to do so. Fifty-nine percent of the teachers reported some verbal contact with the START Project Leader for their students, or with the Site Coordinator, while 38 percent reported no verbal contact. Thirty-eight percent of the teachers reported some written communication from either the Project Leader or the Site Coordinator.

Teachers were asked to rate the level of communication and teamwork between START and what the teacher is doing in the classroom. Twenty-eight percent rated it as good, 44 percent said it "needs work" and 19 percent said that teamwork and communication "did not function." Another 9 percent said they didn't know, or did not answer the question.

These findings indicate that more can be done to increase communication and teamwork with teachers. Most teachers are now favorably disposed toward the START program, and consider it a positive influence on their students' academic growth. Greater communication and teamwork with teachers can solidify and improve the effectiveness of the START program.

Teachers were asked "What would make it easier for teachers to work with after school learning programs?" The most frequent response was to do joint planning activities (31%). Teachers were also likely to mention getting feedback from START

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about how their students are doing (16%). Other kinds of communication were mentioned, such as project leader visits to teachers (9%), providing teachers information about START (6%), more teacher involvement in START, written feedback to teachers, preparation time for START staff, more staff training, START student improvement of classroom behavior, Assembly participation, and increased focus on goals by START (3% each). Only two teachers said there was no need to improve communication and team work, and three teachers said they did not know how it could be improved.

For more detailed information about teachers' assessments of the START program, refer to the Appendix. The most prevalent concern of classroom teachers was the level of discipline and supervision practiced with START students. An interesting contrast was provided by a teacher who had been a START participant in the pilot. This teacher explicitly referred to the issue by saying that START should not have the same standard of conduct as required during regular school hours. "The kids express more of themselves in START and they need that," the teacher noted.

Potential conflicts between teacher expectations and START program goals may underlie these findings. Some teachers also saw the program as one that should "get homework done" or one that would provide one-on-one tutoring for students. The program was not intended to fulfill these objectives.

Teachers' Evaluations of Students

Interviews with teachers included a section focused on specific students who had been enrolled in the START program. On average each teacher had five students in the START program. The sample of 150 students reported here includes all grade levels and 18 of the 20 START schools. The teacher was asked whether the student had improved during the year in academic performance, homework, self-esteem, social skills, other skills, respect for learning and attendance or punctuality. The teacher was also asked whether the student had been helped by START to make these improvements.

Interpretation of the results is somewhat difficult. Several factors are involved: the teacher's knowledge of the student's skills, the teacher's knowledge of the START program, and the teacher's awareness of the student's response to the START program. It's important to remember that (unlike the pilot evaluation) most teachers were not evaluating START students "before and after" START. Some of the START students were enrolled in START during the previous academic year, and most had been going coterminous with the academic year.

Mr. Jones and students discuss constitutional rights in journalism club.

Some students were characterized as "always been good," or "a good student" . Some of these may have been performing well because they were in the START program. For other students, the teachers described an array of intervention strategies targeted to the student. For some students, teachers identified as the key change agent the parents or family members who were working with the students, or time spent with resource specialists, tutors, or others.

In other cases, the teacher reported that the student, despite various strategies for assisting him or her, had made no progress. For younger children this may be due to immaturity; for older children, it may be due to the fact that they are so far behind that they have withdrawn mentally and emotionally from the task. Some children have learning disorders; some have problems at home that affect their performance at times or consistently.

While teachers in the Sacramento City Unified School District had test scores for students in the fall, other districts tested only in the Spring. Interviews with teachers preceded availability of spring test scores, so teachers did not have access to this information when providing assessments about student improvement. Comparing teacher assessments with test score assessments indicates that there is some level of disjuncture. Thirty-one percent of the students who had clearly improved test scores in both reading and math over the previous test were not considered by teachers to have improved ("did not improve" or "don't know if improved"), and 31 percent of the students that teachers did believe had improved showed lack of improvement in either or both reading and math scores.

Teachers were also asked to judge changes in social skills, self-esteem and respect for learning. Many of the teachers were able to identify cases where they had noticed changes that they attributed to START. Often, however, the teachers did not consider their students to be lack ing in these areas and therefore would not have noticed any changes that may have been engendered by the START program.

Table 11 calculates the percentage of children helped by START from a base of students that teachers believed had improved during the year. (Those not reported improving include both good students and poor students.) Table 11 makes clear that where improvement was reported, START helping was also likely to be reported.

Table 11:
Teacher Reports on Students and START Impact on Students

Area of Improvement	Improved	START helped	Percentage
Academic performance	104	64	62%
Homework completion	62	58	94%
Homework quality	70	58	83%
Self-esteem/confidence	69	55	80%
Social skills	63	45	71%
Other skills	46	37	80%
Respect for learning	32	26	81%

Sixty-two percent of those students judged to have improved academically were also believed to be helped by START. Ninety-four percent of the students that teachers believed had improved in their homework completion were judged by teachers to have been helped by START. Eighty-three percent of the students who improved their homework quality were evaluated as helped by START to do so.

Few students were reported to have punctuality or absentee issues (27 or 2 percent), and only 7 percent of these were seen as being helped by START to improve their punctuality or attendance problems. If START has helped improve student attendance or punctuality, it is not detectable through teacher interviews. Again, if students began the school year with the teacher and with the START program, the teacher is not in a position to judge whether START has helped the student improve.

Academic Performance

As reported earlier, in general 62 percent of the teachers said that they believed START had helped their students to improve academic performance. Teachers' assessment of student change and START's role varied a great deal.

As Table 12 shows, teachers identified only 22 percent of the students as not being helped by START to improve when they needed help. This includes two groups, those who did not improve (12%) and those who did improve but the teacher believed it was not due to START (10%). For another 23 percent the teacher did not know if START had helped (18%), or did not know if the student had improved (5%). For 13 percent of the cases, students did not improve but they were good students with consistently good records.

Table 12:
Did START Help the Student Improve Academically?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	62	41%
No improvement - good student	20	13%
No improvement - student needs to improve	18	12%
Improved - START did not help	15	10%
Don't know if START helped	27	18%
Don't know if student improved	8	5%
Total	150	100%

Not including the "don't know" responses (35), 62 of the 115 students, or 54 percent, were considered to have been helped by START to improve, and 17 percent were considered to have been consistently good students not requiring improvement. Twenty-nine percent of this group did not improve or their improvement was not aided by START, according to the teacher.

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There were also significant differences between grades and between English and English-learning students.

Teacher assessment of START's impact of student academic improvement varied significantly by grade. Kindergarten (83%) and first grade students (75%) were most likely to be judged as being helped by START academically, and sixth graders (15%) were least likely. (Caution is needed in interpreting these data, since some of the test score data indicate that older students gained more from START involvement.) Sixty percent of the students learning English were judged by their teachers as being helped by START in improving academically, compared with 38 percent of those who are native English speakers or already speak English well.

Kindergarten (83%) and first grade students (75%) were most likely to be judged as being helped by START academically.

While teachers' assessments are subjective and limited in scope, they do provide some clues to how the START program is working. From the teachers' perspective, it tends to be more important for younger grades and for those needing additional assistance in developing English language skills. These are precisely the students for whom test score data is typically lacking. It is especially interesting that test score comparisons showed significant gains for fifth and sixth graders beyond their peers not in START, but fifth and sixth grade teachers were less likely to notice and attribute academic improvements to START.

Homework Completion

Ninety-four percent of the students who teachers believed had improved in homework completion were judged by teachers to have been helped by START (see Table 13). In assessing START's impact on homework completion, teachers noted that some students had always completed their homework (36%) and for some homework completion had not improved during the year (19%). Thirty eight percent of the students were judged to have been helped by START to improve homework completion. For six percent of the students, teachers did not know if there had been a START impact on homework completion.

Fifth grade students Bao Nguyen, Tenisha Clary and Jenny Tien, work on homework completion in the START program at Jedediah Smith School.

Table 13:
Did START Help Improve Homework Completion?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	58	38%
No, homework always completed	54	36%
No, homework completion not improved	29	19%
Don't know if START helped improve	9	6%
Total	150	100%

Teachers who had some involvement in START were more likely to say that students had improved homework completion, and more likely to say that START had helped students improve homework completion. Involvement typically included use of the teacher's room, often enabling teachers to observe the program. It also included three cases of teachers who were part of the START program. In two of the three cases, the teachers' roles were primarily after-school homework sessions.

According to teacher evaluations, START helped some grades more than others with homework completion. The impacts of START on homework completion were greatest in the first and second grades. Seventy-five percent of first graders and 56 percent of second graders were judged helped by START in this way, while only 8 percent of sixth graders were. Other grades were in-between these extremes. Some fifth and sixth grade teachers mentioned that their homework requirements for the students exceeded the time that START allotted for homework. One said she did not think they should have enrichment activities unless they had completed their homework. The START program, however, is not intended to complete student homework, but to ensure that children know how to complete their homework.

Some teachers mentioned other strategies they had for getting students to do homework, such as disincentives they offer (having to miss out on fun activities, use recess for homework) and enlisting parent help. In some cases, they believed it was their strategy rather than the START program that improved their completion.

Sixth grade Jedediah Smith START students Anthony Hoang, Orelia Castle and Juan Johnson work on getting homework done

START had a greater impact on English language learners in homework completion improvement, with 45 percent helped as compared to 36 percent of non-ELL students.

There were statistically significant differences among sites, indicating that site coordinators may have put more emphasis on it at some sites. At one school, the site coordinator set up homework return boxes so that students were able to return the homework to their teacher before leaving school on the day it was assigned. A number of teachers mentioned that completing homework and turning in homework were two different tasks, and that sometimes the students left homework at home, or otherwise lost it. The ability to turn in homework after completing it in START addresses both tasks.

Volunteer Virginia Moose listens as Rosemary Coronado reviews a homework problem.

Homework Quality

Eighty-one percent of the students that teachers believed had improved in their homework quality were judged by teachers to have been helped by START (see Table 14). This represented 39 percent of all START students assessed by their teachers. For 25 percent of the students, teachers did not think that START had helped the student improve and for 15 percent, the teachers did not know whether START had helped. Twenty-one percent of the students had consistently good records on homework quality according to the teacher.

Table 14:
Did Start Help Improve Homework Quality?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	58	39%
Did not	38	25%
Homework quality always good	32	21%
Don't know	22	15%
Total	150	100%

Teachers who were involved in the START program were more likely to say that students had improved in homework quality. They were not statistically more likely to say that START helped the student improve homework quality. The impacts of START on homework quality were greatest in the first and second grades and least in the sixth. Fifty-five percent of the English Language Learners were helped by START in improvement of their homework quality. Teachers emphasized that for these students, there is usually no one at home who can help them.

Self Esteem/Confidence

Teachers said that START helped 37 percent of the START students improve in self-esteem or confidence. These students were eighty percent of the students that teachers believed had improved in self-esteem or confidence. In most cases, those judged to not have improved in self-esteem were considered already high in self-esteem and confidence.

Table 15:
Did START Help Improve Student Self-esteem or Confidence?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	55	36.7%
Did not	70	46.7%
Don't know	24	16.0%
Total	150	100.0%

Impacts on self-esteem appear to be greatest for Kindergarten (75%), first grade (56%), sixth grade (46%), and second grade (42%); less impact was identified for fifth grade (28%), third grade (24%), and fourth grade (21%).

From teacher's responses, there was no differential impact of START on English language learners improvements in self-esteem and confidence.

Social Skills

Thirty percent of the START students were believed by teachers to have been helped by START to improve social skills. These were seventy-one percent of those students judged to have improved in social skills.

Table 16:
Did START Help Improve Social Skills?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	45	30%
Did not	79	52%
Don't know	24	16%
No response	2	1%
Total	150	100%

Impacts on social skills appear to be greatest for Kindergarten (83%), first grade (75%), sixth grade (38%), and second grade (31%); less impact was identified for fifth grade (17%), third grade (15%) and fourth grade (14%). Kindergarten and first graders were much more likely to be helped by START in social skills according to the

teachers. There was no differential impact of START on English language learners improvements in social skills.

Other Skills

For 25 percent of the students, the teacher identified skills that START had helped the student improve. ELL students were more likely to improve other skills than other students because language was one of the skills noted by teachers as being improved by START. START appears to have had impact on other skill development for sixth, fourth, Kindergarten, first, second, and fifth grades in that order.

Respect for Learning

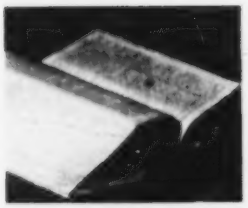
Teachers identified only 17 percent of the students for whom the START program seemed to have improved respect for learning. Teachers identified 38 percent of the students as already having high respect for learning. Students most likely to be helped by START to increase respect for learning were Kindergarten students (50%) and first graders (42%).

Punctuality and Attendance

From the teachers' perspective, START had least impact on punctuality or attendance. Few students were reported to have these problems (18%), and those who did were not considered by their teachers to have been helped by START to improve on punctuality or attendance. Often teachers attributed these problems to problems at home.

Drop-Outs

Teachers were also asked to comment on students who dropped out of START. According to teachers' responses, 81 percent of the drop students needed a program like START, and only 19 percent were expected by teachers not to need START for academic improvement. For 28 percent of the drop-outs, teachers did not know why the student had dropped. For the other cases, there were a variety of reasons given. The largest single group of reasons had to do with children's reasons for not wanting to go to the program. These included the desire to play more, feelings of frustration or boredom, "too long of a day", other activities, including being with relatives who had dropped the START program, or shyness or fear. In other cases, the child was "needed at home" or parents wanted the child at home. In a few cases, the parents were not happy with the START program, or were disciplining the child by taking away the START program. Transportation and family schedule problems also interfered with START attendance. In a few cases, the child was not going to START because of behavior problems or attendance problems. It appears from the teachers' responses that the START drop-out rate could be improved through stronger ties between the family and the START program.



Evaluator's Comment

Teachers' evaluations of the START program are limited by their knowledge of the program, their awareness of how well students were doing before joining START, and by teachers' expectations. Our pilot evaluation report had found that teachers assessments did vary sometimes from test score results. A comparison during this evaluation indicated that about 30 percent of the teachers' evaluations about academic performance were at odds with test score data.

The teacher interviews have been useful for providing qualitative information about students and for learning more about how teachers view the START program. It is not clear that they can provide useful judgements on how well students have grown in social skills, self-esteem and self-confidence, or in attitudes toward learning. Moreover, many teachers showed reluctance to spend time providing interview or questionnaire data. An independent evaluation of student growth in these dimensions would be preferable.

Teachers' views about the impact of the START program on students are generally positive. However, teacher awareness and understanding of START's impact could improve through working more closely with START on diagnosis and attention to learning needs of each student.

Two views of the same classroom, with one program leader, Julian Navarette, background with baseball cap, and one volunteer (background, above). Students include Joaquin Sanchez (l) and Hector Ibarra (r) above and Nai Saechao (l) and Sabrina Love (r) in the photo on the right.

Principals Evaluate the START Program

Personal interviews were conducted in April, 1997 with 18 principals of the twenty schools with START programs Principals were asked about their general impressions of the START program, and also about specific strengths and weaknesses of the program, at their site, and overall. They were asked about the level of teamwork and communication between the START program and the school, about the problems (if any) with the START program at their site and overall, and asked what changes they would like to see in the START program. Principals also provided information about the impacts (if any) of the START program on parent involvement, on school efforts to reduce graffiti, vandalism, crime and absenteeism, and on school efforts to improve academic performance, student skills and confidence.

"It is a needed service; it's well managed; and we have a good site coordinator."
—principal

In general, the principals' evaluation of START was positive. Principals also had many suggestions about ways to improve the START program and its relationship to the school.

General

Of the eighteen START principals interviewed, 72 percent responded with primarily positive statements when asked to give their general impressions of the START program. Two principals (11%) were preoccupied with the start-up problems they had been experiencing in getting the program underway. Three of the principals (17%) were primarily concerned with disappointments they had experienced with the START program. [Two principals declined to be interviewed.]

Table 18:
Principals' General Impressions of START

Impression	Frequency	Percent
Primarily positive	13	72%
Start-up problems	2	11%
Disappointing results	3	17%
Total	18	100%

The major factor in the principals' assessments seems to be the site coordinator. Staff quality (including turnover) is also a big factor. One principal said, "It is a needed service; it's well managed; and we have a good site coordinator." Another observed, "It is far better than last year. The site coordinator is more effective and has worked out the bugs." One of the disappointed principals said, "There have been personnel problems, high turnover, and the quality is lacking." A principal who

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strongly supports the program noted, "I was more pleased with last year's staff. They were more experienced and had site experience."

Another, more elusive quality, is the connectedness between the school's academic performance goals and strategies and the START program. Where these are integrated, principals have high enthusiasm. Where they are not, though the principal may support the START program, there is a less positive evaluation. One principal observed, "I don't think it is making a change in scores. I'd like to have a START program but with a more academic focus." On the opposite side, another principal said "I like the synergy developing with the mission of this school and the community." Similarly, a positive principal said "It does a real good job of supporting the academic program, enhancing literacy and homework. . . . we have parents who are unable to help their students either because of language or dysfunctionality. These kids benefit from START."

Strengths of the START Program

There were many strengths mentioned by the principals during the interviews.

Personnel. In general, principals were pleased with the personnel operating the START program, and often mentioned their site coordinator as a strength of the program. In particular they pointed out (where relevant) the importance of having bilingual aides from the school as staff in the START program. Principals appreciated having school staff and members of the community working as staff for the START program. Some noted staff stability as a strength, and some noted involvement of certificated staff in the program as a strength.

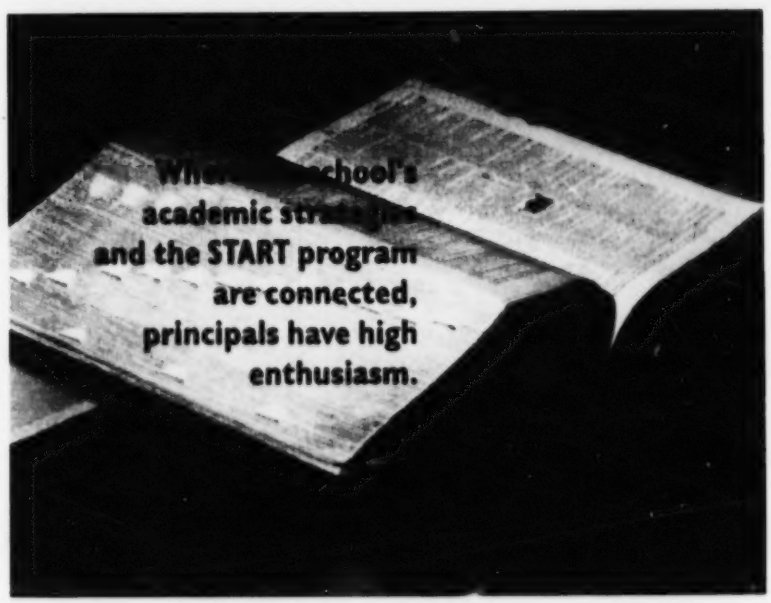
Typical responses about strengths of the program were:

"They are good coordinators with good skills; they are trained."

"They are well organized. The staff is responsible and caring."

"The personnel are community people. They know the school and the students."

"Training for the staff."



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Linkage with school program. Principals appreciated the linkage of the START program with the regular school program, regardless of the level of partnership that had been achieved. One principal said "We are making inroads to merging the systems; we are making a step to link after-school and regular day programs." Another said that a major strength of START is "being able to help students with literacy, and homework in small groups; it helps self-esteem."

Variety of strengths. There were many individual strengths mentioned by principals. Some referred to concepts; others referred to nuts and bolts. Other examples include: site based management; back-up plans for staff absence; it is a "safe haven for needy students;" there is sensitivity to cultural diversity; summer session; use of building/campus reduces vandalism; parent support; planned activities; support from the City Council; media coverage; snacks for the kids; volunteers; involvement of high school students; students positive about the program; potential for growth.

"Inexperience of staff - they need training in basics, in procedures, and they need to know the school rules."—a principal

Weaknesses of the START Program

While principals usually strongly supported the program, most also could identify weaknesses in the program. Concerns about staff were very important. Just as the staff represented one of the most important strengths, staff issues represented an important area of weakness. This simply recognizes again that from the principal's point of view, the staff are a defining factor for the START program. **Twelve of the principals** mentioned some **staff issue**, including qualifications, training, absenteeism, turnover.

In commenting on weaknesses, one principal said the major weakness was "inexperience of staff. They need training in basics, in procedures, and they need to know the school rules." For this principal, communication between the program and the school was a related concern.Another principal put it this way: "staffing; they are part-time staff and they lack commitment. There is absenteeism."

Seven of the principals mentioned **behavior management,** supervision of students, and related issues like noise, cleanliness and discipline problems. These principals often pointed to a connection between the training of staff and the weakness in student supervision.

One principal observed when thinking about START's weaknesses: "discipline and student behavior — the training of the project leaders. The students are not showing enough respect for the START staff." Another said "the program leaders need to be better trained for discipline and management. There is not enough supervision."

Principals were also concerned about the linkage of the START program to the academic program, to academic performance, to homework completion, to the classroom teachers, and the literacy program. **Six** of the principals expressed concern about the **academic** component.

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At the other end of the spectrum, three principals mentioned space problems as weaknesses. The blend of concerns expressed by principals, ranged from operational problems like keeping the school staff up to date on START student drops, to big picture issues like the strengthening of the academic performance of the school through the academic component of START.

Teamwork and Communication of the START Program

Principals were asked about the level of teamwork and communication between the START program and their school. In general, principals reported strong teamwork and communication. The largest group (nine, or 50%) said that teamwork and communication were excellent or very good, while 6 principals (33%) said that it needed work. Only one principal said that teamwork and communication did not work at all. Two principals did not answer the question.

"We address issues at staff meetings and the site coordinator keeps me informed."— a principal

In most cases the principals described successful efforts to overcome difficulties in communication. They also made practical suggestions on how communications and teamwork could be improved at their school.

A principal who said communication and teamwork are excellent noted: "we address issues at staff meetings and the site coordinator keeps me informed." At this site, the site coordinator is also a member of the school's staff.

A principal who said that the teamwork "needs work" said "I did not know what the schedule is for START; yesterday they had a parent meeting, but I did not know. Therefore I could not help them with attendance through my channels of communication." At this school, START had just begun and start-up problems were a part of the difficulties identified by the principal.

A principal who did not answer the question made the observation that "communication with the principal was strong; the classroom teachers have complaints about the use of their rooms, and the custodians have complaints about trash and spills." At this school, conflict between the principal and teachers spanned a number of issues, and START may have been swept into a more general lack of teamwork and communication.

Practical suggestions that a number of principals endorsed focused on a need for protocols for keeping principals informed. A bulletin or forms submitted on a regular basis should inform principals of such things as days when START would not be held, names of students dropped from START, events scheduled for parents, informing parents when START students are dropped.

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START Impact on Graffiti, Vandalism, Absenteeism and Discipline

Principals were asked to comment on the problems they have with graffiti, vandalism, absenteeism and discipline, and to assess whether START has had any impact on those problems at their sites.

Table 19:
Principals' Assessments of Graffiti, Vandalism, Absenteeism and Discipline

Problem Area	No Problems	Some Problems	N/A
Graffiti	39%	61%	
Vandalism	44%	54%	
Absenteeism	39%	39%	22%
Discipline	28%	54%	18%

Principals varied in their assessment of the incidence of graffiti, vandalism, and discipline problems and the extent to which absenteeism is a problem at the school. None of the principals reported serious or intractable problems. Among those who did report problems, most reported that no improvement had been achieved because of START. However several principals said that they liked having the program on campus after school because they believed it could be helping to protect the campus. Without the START program on campus, vandalism and graffiti could be worse.

Table 20:
Principals' Assessments of Changes in Graffiti, Vandalism, Absenteeism and Discipline

Problem Area	Same	Improved
Graffiti	91%	9%
Vandalism	80%	20%
Absenteeism	71%	29%
Discipline	67%	33%

Discipline and absenteeism were most likely to change during this period, but principals generally did not consider START as a part of what was causing the change. Regarding students who are discipline problems, four principals said that some of the students with discipline issues were in START while three said that the students with discipline problems did not stay in START.

Principals were asked to list the other programs they had in place to address iissues like literacy, vandalism, graffiti, discipline, self-esteem and pride in the school. The following list was generated during principal interviews. None of the following programs does what START does; and none has the scope that START has. However, they represent corollary efforts going on that also may have positive

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impacts in the same direction as intended by START. Any gross level measurements of change would include any independent effects of these programs as well.

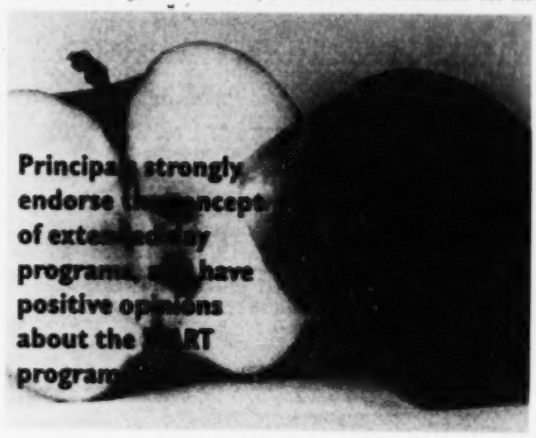
Table 21:
Programs in Place

Class Size Reduction	Project Achieve
Student Council	Conflict Management Training and Mediation Training
Caught Ya Being Good	MESA
Monthly Awards	Buddy Program
Literacy Programs	Magnet School
Exchange Program	Tutorial Reading
Girl Scouts	Visions - a counseling program
Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools	Honor Guard
Title I Intersession	Odyssey of the Mind
Serve Sacramento	Red Ribbon Week
PTA	Extended Day (voluntary teacher program)
Tutoring Programs	Student of the Month
Homework Club	Safe Schools
SMART (tutoring)	Beautification Day
Group Reading	Readers & Writers Workshop
Epstein Model	Chapter I Computer Writing to Read
Parent Reading Program	4th R
Community Police Officers	

At each site there is a unique blend of programs underway that together with START are directed toward not only better academic performance, but better social skills, allegiance to the school, and the reduction of absenteeism, truancy, vandalism and discipline problems. In this context, it is not possible to independently assess the impact of START.

Problems and Changes for the START Program

While principals strongly endorse the concept of extended day programs, and have positive opinions about the START program, and many principals would like to have many, if not all, of their students in after-school learning programs, they did identify problems and desired changes. Principals identified a broad range of concerns that they had about the START program. They also were generous with suggestions about how to improve the program. These comments were offered in the spirit of collaboration. In dealing with problems, principals usually described the kinds of problems that they had had, and the solutions that they had applied.



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Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

A major part of the concept of the START program is the involvement of the community and neighborhood volunteers. The START program is staffed at a ratio of 20 students per program leader, but would like to provide a ratio of 10 students per adult, or less, at least part of the time. It is also desirable that volunteers be available to the children on a regular basis. Ideally, a volunteer would participate at least a couple of hours a week for at least six weeks. To achieve an ideal volunteer participation rate would have required about 1,200 hours per week of volunteer effort over the school year. That is, at each of 20 schools, there would have been four days a week in which five adults provided three hours of volunteer service. For a 36 week school year the total hours would be 43,200. (The actual number of volunteers needed to reach such a goal would depend on the average hours per week of volunteer service.)

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DIANA GRIEGO ERWIN

START volunteers do good, feel good

Bee Columnist Diana Griego Erwin has written several columns urging readers to volunteer with START.

During the pilot period, START reported 203 volunteers and did not provide records on participation by week. During the 1996-97 academic year, START reported 227 volunteers, and an additional 60 parents at one school available on call to participate in special events, and an additional 59 Learning and Self Esteem Program high school students. These LSEP students committed to a 15 week program to work with three kindergarten or first grade students on a daily basis (Monday through Thursday). [This student program added approximately an additional 3,480 volunteer hours over the period September 1996 to May 1997, or about 97 hours per week.] Data in Table 23 does not include the Learning and Self Esteem Program and is taken from the START Volunteers 1997 Report, June 19, 1997. Table 23 describes volunteer participation.

As Table 23 illustrates, 151 START volunteers with scheduled hours per week gave an estimated 492 hours of volunteer service per week. Another 77 volunteers provided additional support. The most important service, scheduled participation, averaged 3.3 hours a week for 151 volunteers. Adding Learning and Self-Esteem volunteers at 97 hours per week equals a total of 589 hours of scheduled volunteer involvement with START students. While START is getting closer to its volunteer participation goal, it is still far from an ideal volunteer program.

Table 22:
Principals' Report of Most Noticed Problems (multiple responses)

Problem Noticed	# of Principals
Communication with teachers	6
Protocols for communication with school/community	6
Need to improve academic content	5
Problems with teachers in sharing space	5
Personnel qualifications	4
Training for START personnel	4
Coordination with sports & other programs on campus	4

Suggestions for Change

1) Protocols for Communication. Several principals made suggestions about how to ensure that everyone is kept informed about the START program. Both weekly forms and bulletins were mentioned. In particular, principals want to know that they and the parents are well informed about days when START is not meeting, what students have been dropped from START, and any events scheduled for family or other visits to the START program. Some principals specifically want to know that there is a procedure for bringing in substitutes for START project leaders, and they want to know who the substitutes are.

2) Linkage with the Classroom Teacher. Principals had a variety of suggestions about how to improve the linkage between the START program and the classroom teacher. Some strongly preferred a literacy program that would directly reinforce classroom teaching. They would like to see START staff trained to support the approaches used in the school. Some wanted to see a stronger liaison with the teachers, either through regular surveying of teachers about how START students are doing in the classroom, or greater START staff time spent meeting with classroom teachers. Some principals would like for START staff to spend more time on coordination, planning and clean-up.

3) Discipline and Student Management. Principals would like to see START personnel receive more training and coaching in student management and discipline. They mentioned the need for maintaining standards of conduct in the classroom, and the need for training students in expressing respect.

4) Build Stronger Relationships with the Community and Parents. Schools varied in the degree to which the START program engaged parents and the community. Principals recognize the key role of the parents and the community in the education of students, and would like to see a greater involvement in the START program. Some principals talked about a contract with the parents to engage them in some way in the school experience. They strongly recommended that a way be found to increase parental commitment to the education process, either through volunteering within the START program or in some other way. The need for more adults to volunteer within the START program was emphasized as a key to improving the students academic performance.

Table 23:
START Volunteers 1996-97

Scheduled/Type	Number Scheduled	Percent Scheduled	Percent Total	Hrs/Wk	Percent	Average Hrs/Wk
Adults	82	54%	36%	156.62	32%	1.9
Seniors	4	3%	2%	11.75	2%	2.9
Corporate	21	14%	9%	30.38	6%	1.4
Interns (HS & College)	44	29%	19%	293.25	60%	6.7
Subtotal	151	100%		492	100%	3.3
Not Scheduled/Type						
Adults	57	75%	25%			
Seniors	4	5%	2%			
Corporate	10	13%	4%			
Interns (HS & College)	5	6%	2%			
Subtotal	76	100%				
Total	227		100%			

START would need about 400 volunteers willing to work every week of the academic year to reach the 1200 hour per week goal. That is a 265 percent increase in volunteers. Sixty percent of the scheduled hours of volunteer assistance were provided by high school and college interns and 40 percent by adult volunteers. While interns typically volunteered 6.7 hours per week, adult volunteers averaged far less, with seniors giving more time per week (2.9 hours on average), and corporate volunteers giving the least time (1.4 hours on average).

START would need about . . . a 265 percent increase in volunteers.

While seniors generally gave more of their time, only 2 percent of the hours donated were senior volunteer hours, and only 4 percent of all volunteers were classified as seniors. Corporate participation was also relatively low, with only 13 percent of all volunteers recruited by corporations and only 6 percent of all volunteer hours provided by corporate sponsors.

Most of the adult volunteers and adult volunteer hours appear to have been recruited by the START program (internally) and most of these are family, friends and neighbors of the START programs at the START sites. START reported that 154 of the 227 volunteers (68%) were so recruited. The positive side of that is that most of the volunteers are from the families and communities of START students. The negative side of that is that the community outside of the START program is not generating much support for the program. Of the adults

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recruited into START as volunteers, 18 (eight percent) were recruited through presentations, media or other outreach by the program to the community in general. These 18 are all scheduled volunteers and represent 12 percent of the regularly scheduled volunteers in the program.

A much greater response will be needed, particularly from the community outside of the START neighborhoods, if the START promise is to be realized. Seniors, in particular, retired teachers, and those capable of teaching elementary students at all levels, could provide students more attention. While START students are making measureable progress with existing volunteers, a greater effort by volunteers could significantly accelerate and expand the learning, as well as reach students who today are not growing academically.

Competent and dependable volunteers can have a significant impact on program performance. The program infrastructure has been provided through public-private funding and partnership, but the success of the program really depends upon individuals who are willing to help children. Getting more adults to spend more time with more children on a sustained basis seems to be the biggest challenge facing START.

START should establish volunteer participation goals and monitor progress, with a regular report to the community leadership. More media attention to those volunteers who exemplify the best qualifications could help. To the maximum extent possible, START families must be involved as volunteers. A task force of specially qualified community leaders and exemplary START parents specifically focused on the goal of reaching volunteer participation goals may be a next step.

Volunteer Virginia Moose works primarily with these third grade boys on their homework: Frederick Castle (standing left), Poly Regina [standing right] and Yong Yi Her (upper right).

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Conclusion and Recommendations

During its first full academic year of operation, the START program faced many challenges and served many communities. This report demonstrates that the START program had a measurable, positive impact on student performance during the 1996-1997 academic year, and is fulfilling a much needed role in the educational community.

Most START students on average are achieving greater than normal academic growth. The program is still in the process of being implemented, and a variety of operational issues and challenges must be met to achieve optimum performance. It is unrealistic to expect early year operation to have substantial impacts on student performance. This report demonstrates that the program has had a measurable positive impact on students performing at the lowest levels when compared with their peers. It suggests that fifth and sixth graders at low reading levels may be taking better advantage of START to improve academically than third and fourth graders.

Recommendations

• **Address Drop-Outs.** Drop-outs do not receive the benefit of the program. Substantial levels of drop-out from the program impede program performance. The program, school, families and community must continue to find ways to address the reasons for drop-outs and reduce drop-out from START.

• **Recruit and Retain More Volunteers.** Competent and dependable volunteers can have a significant impact on program performance. Through additional adult attention, children in the program can accelerate their academic progress.

START should establish volunteer participation goals and monitor progress, with a regular report to the community leadership. More media attention to those volunteers who exemplify the best qualifications could help. To the maximum extent possible, START families must be involved as volunteers. A task force of specially qualified community leaders and exemplary START parents specifically focused on the goal of reaching volunteer participation goals may be the next step.

• **Collaborate with Supportive Teachers.** Collaboration between the START program and the schools is a key element that requires on-going and two-way communication. Teachers and principals had a number of suggestions on ways to improve the collaboration.

To fully meet its objectives, START should identify teachers in terms of their support for the START program, and provide information to them in proportion to their interest. START should identify those teachers who are a resource for the program

and work closely with them while keeping all teachers informed at a basic level about the program. A teacher support group could be a very valuable ally in the development of the START program, and at least some teachers appear to be very willing to provide more support to START if solicited. Specifically inviting teachers to volunteer time to the program could help identify the most supportive teachers who can also be delegates for the program in the teacher community at their school.

- **Continuous Attention to Personnel Issues.** Personnel issues are always very central to the labor-intensive work of teaching. START recruits, trains, manages, supervises and evaluates over 100 employees who work directly with children. Working with the schools and other partners to continuously improve staff skills and effectiveness will obviously be a big part of START's ongoing challenge.

- **Continue and Broaden Evaluation Effort.** During the months the research for this report was conducted, continuous feedback was provided to the START program. As a result of this and other internal evaluation efforts, START incorporated suggestions and has made many changes and improvements in the program as suggested. A continuous evaluation process assists the program as it grows to correct its course in response to feedback. One difficulty is in using scarce evaluation resources to cover the many elements worthy of evaluation. This study found that using teacher assessments was problematic. By focusing primarily on test score data to measure student change, there is a danger that the program will not get valuable feedback that would be available from other evaluation tools. More thought needs to be given to additional evaluation tools.

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START Programs by Site, Length of Participation

	Site #:	2	7	18	4	6	17	9
Percent of START students:								
Group 1	Pilot Plus	13%	13%	13%	10%	23%	16%	11%
Group 4	Pilot Only	34%	17%	21%	24%	18%	36%	40%
Group 2	Fall Only	33%	17%	32%	32%	19%	29%	32%
Group 3	Dropped Fall	14%	18%	10%	18%	5%	9%	9%
Group 5	Partial Pilot	7%	27%	13%	13%	33%	3%	6%
Group 9	New	0%	8%	11%	3%	3%	8%	2%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of START students:								
Group 1	Pilot Plus	21	28	24	21	49	30	24
Group 4	Pilot Only	56	38	39	69	40	69	83
Group 2	Fall Only	55	37	58	39	11	55	67
Group 3	Dropped Fall	23	40	18	52	38	17	18
Group 5	Partial Pilot	11	59	23	29	70	5	12
Group 9	New	0	17	20	7	7	15	5
	Total	166	219	182	217	215	191	209
% in groups 1, 2, & 4		80%	47%	66%	65%	59%	81%	83%
# in groups 1, 2, & 4		132	103	121	129	100	154	174

	Site #:	16	10	11	12	13	14	Average
Percent of START students:								
Group 1	Pilot Plus	20%	16%	8%	22%	7%	9%	14%
Group 4	Pilot Only	26%	18%	32%	22%	28%	17%	26%
Group 2	Fall Only	34%	31%	27%	27%	33%	29%	29%
Group 3	Dropped Fall	14%	11%	7%	15%	8%	12%	11%
Group 5	Partial Pilot	n/a	16%	15%	11%	12%	19%	13%
Group 9	New	8%	8%	11%	3%	13%	14%	7%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of START students:								
Group 1	Pilot Plus	46	37	18	33	12	16	28
Group 4	Pilot Only	60	42	71	33	49	30	52
Group 2	Fall Only	79	74	59	41	57	52	53
Group 3	Dropped Fall	32	26	15	23	13	22	26
Group 5	Partial Pilot	N/A	38	33	17	20	33	27
Group 9	New	18	20	24	4	22	24	14
	Total	235	237	220	151	173	177	199
% in groups 1, 2, & 4		79%	65%	67%	71%	68%	55%	68%
# in groups 1, 2, & 4		185	153	148	107	118	98	132

Group Definitions

Group 1	Enrolled in December 1996 and was enrolled since at least 3/96 in START
Group 4	Enrolled for entire pilot period, but not 12/96; rarely, completed some pilot & some fall
Group 2	Enrolled 12/96 since September or October
Group 3	Enrolled in fall and dropped
Group 5	Dropped pilot, or added during pilot, and not enrolled 12/96

Teachers' Interviews: Additional Information

Teachers were very balanced in their assessment of the START program. They were asked to name strengths and weaknesses of the program, and tended, overall, to name as many strengths as weaknesses. Four teachers mentioned no strengths and five mentioned no weaknesses.

Table 7:
Number of Strengths and Weaknesses Mentioned by Teachers

Number	Number of Teachers	
Mentioned	Strengths	Weaknesses
0	4	5
1	12	11
2	7	8
3+	10	9
	33	33

Teachers identified a number and a variety of strengths of the START program on their campus, and multiple responses were recorded for up the first two of those identified. These are listed in Table 8.

Table 8:
Strengths of the START Program (Multiple Responses)

Category	# of Responses	% of Responses	% of Cases
The activities	7	14%	22%
Level of student interest	7	14%	22%
It's well organized	6	12%	18%
Personnel	6	12%	18%
Help with homework	3	6%	9%
It's a safe environment	3	6%	9%
Student focus is good	2	4%	6%
The staff care	1	2%	3%
Momentum	1	2%	3%
They know our school	1	2%	3%
Staff/teacher communication	1	2%	3%
High school tutors	1	2%	3%
Volunteers	1	2%	3%
The literacy component	1	2%	3%
Help for students limited in English	1	2%	3%
The focus on the individual	1	2%	3%
The element of celebration	1	2%	3%

Teachers were asked what changes they would like to see in the START program and up to three changes were coded. Discipline was high on the list, as was improvement in teacher/START communication. Teachers also were thinking about ways that the START program could increase its academic impact. Some teachers were eager to see increases in START capabilities. Table 10 summarizes the multiple responses to this question.

Table 10:
Changes Teachers Would Like to See in START Program

Change Mentioned	# of Responses	% of Responses	% of Cases
Discipline			
Practice discipline	9	12%	29%
Training for START PL in discipline	3	4%	10%
Teacher/START communication			
Teacher/START meetings	8	11%	26%
Inform teachers re: students	6	8%	19%
Inform teachers re: START	5	7%	16%
Involve teachers	1	1%	3%
Improve Academics			
Get homework done/check HW	6	8%	19%
Align START with level review reqts.	4	5%	13%
More specific help (math, English, oral 1 to 1, literacy)	8	11%	26%
More training for PLs - academic	4	5%	13%
START Resources			
More staff/more staff hours	3	4%	10%
Better quality, consistency in staff	3	4%	10%
More resources	2	3%	6%
More enrichment/motivational work	5	7%	16%
Serve more/recruit needy kids	3	4%	10%
Coordinate with other programs	2	3%	6%
Transportation	2	3%	6%
START management improvement	1	1%	3%
Parent involvement	1	1%	3%

One positive fifth grade teacher said "Have the teachers be more involved in targeting and getting parents involved at the beginning of the year. We need a report from START on how our students are doing, like a 'basketball check-off,' on behavior, attendance and homework. If the numbers get low, ask the teachers who should be added to START. The kids really value it."

A third grade teacher who has been involved in START said "There needs to be more communication with the classroom teacher, and even three-way communication involving the parents, such as a report form that all three sign. There should be long

Parent satisfaction	1	2%	3%
Don't know	6	12%	18%
Total responses	64	100%	

The teachers noted a variety of strengths, and no single element of the program attracted a majority of the teachers. The most common responses were either positive comments about the activities, or the students' interest in the activities, or were positive comments about the personnel and organization of the program.

Table 9:
First Weakness Mentioned for the START Program

Weakness	# of Responses	% of Responses
Discipline lacking	9	27%
Homework not done	4	12%
Supervision poor	3	9%
Staff Quality	2	6%
Literacy program inadequate	2	6%
Communication needs work	2	6%
Parental involvement low	2	6%
No help for ELL-Spanish	1	3%
YRE Coordination	1	3%
Snack quality	1	3%
Program should serve more students	1	3%
Don't Know	3	9%
None	2	6%

What is notable in teacher description of weaknesses is that 36 percent of the respondents (12 teachers at 9 locations) mentioned either discipline or supervision as the weakness of the program. This is was the largest single weakness identified, and nothing else comes close.

Under this heading teachers were concerned about a variety of things. Some had had problems with START students using classrooms, including things missing, things used, out of order, or misplaced. Some objected to the tone of interaction between project leaders and students (lack of respect, lack of decorum appropriate to learning, project leaders' tolerance of behavior that teachers do not tolerate). Others complained that school rules were not being enforced or that students weren't managed properly. At its worst, the discipline problem is perceived by teachers as an active undermining of their relationship with the student by START project leaders.

An interesting contrast was provided by a teacher who had been a START participant in the pilot. This teacher explicitly referred to the issue by saying that START should not have the same standard of conduct as required during regular school hours. "The kids express more of themselves in START and they need that," the teacher noted.

term and short term goals for each student, with an entry and exit survey of the child regarding what they want to achieve and what they did to achieve it."

A fourth grade teacher said "there needs to be much more time and focus on helping with homework. The parents have complained that the students are not doing their homework at START. The management of students to appropriate school behavior is also needed."

A first grade teacher said "tailor the help to the students that are missing something. Ask the teacher what specific skills to work on with individual students."

A kindergarten teacher asked for "better alignment with grade level benchmarks including rules of conduct. The project leaders should have the districts grade level benchmarks. And, we need an in-service day for mutual input."

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